

EXHIBIT B

From: Sonya Larson <larsonya@gmail.com>
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To: Yael Goldstein Love
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Attachments: The Kindest, 11.30.15.docx

Hi Yael!!

Dude: it was so wonderful to =artake in Thai food and gossip with you last week. We must do again, over =kype, please.

In the meantime, I'm sending yo= a 3rd story in case Audible is still looking for more possibilities. Feel=no pressure if they/you have already had their fill!

<=iv>Onward with BOTH of our writing,
Sonya

Sonya Larson
299 Broadway #2
Cambridge, MA 02139
617.669.6770
larsonya@gmail.com

5,165 words

The Kindest

When I was dying, everybody was nicer to me. Nurses washed my hair. Old teachers and old roommates and total randoms came to see me, kissing my bandaged hand. Bao brought me underwear and slept beside me on a chair. Mom flew from Philly, Dad from ND, and Sui from Xian, all the way across the planet. The flowers! The questions! *Are you in pain? How much? If only you weren't so rare.* I was scared and they wanted to hear all about it. They didn't say How? or Why? or How could you? They didn't roll their eyes or say Well I'd better get going. They didn't let me smoke, but I saw them mull it over, as if to say Well it isn't going to kill her. They were riveted. They leaned forward. They were hungry and I was their food.

Birth must be like that. If you could remember. But you can't.

Then along came my Angel. A real one, too: no accident of her own, no sudden onset anything. She wasn't dead, and she wasn't even doing a chain thing, aimed ultimately to save her husband or her sister or her very best bud.

It was just that she had two kidneys and she only needed one. And on top of that, grinned the surgeon: we matched.

That night a thin tube dripped cold dreams into my elbow. Bao kissed the cross around his neck and squeezed down by where my fingers were. He said, "It's happening."

It's happening? I tried to say, but my mouth was stuffed with hot rags. My husband's gaze flapped through my eyelashes, stammering mutely like a face in a flipbook. I counted backwards and drifted down through a valley of misty waterfalls.

A finger snapped. It was over. I woke to the sight of Bao crying into his hands, overwhelmed like I've never seen him.

I called out. "Bao?"

"Baby!" he said, leaping from the chair to wedge his eager arms underneath me, and we were laughing and the laughter felt strange traveling up through my lungs, like a language we were remembering only now. Even the ceiling looked new: large tiles sprayed freely with black dots of so many shapes and sizes. I could see in them intricate patterns, like constellations in stars.

Bao looked up too, but his eyes were somewhere else. "How can we ever thank her?" he said, so joyful he was enraged. "How? How?"

The people gathered around me. They shook the surgeon's hand, they burst and clinked champagne. It spilled on the sheet, it spilled on me.

Night came. The people left. They said Thank God this was behind us. They said It's time they got some rest. Bao pried my fingers from his sleeve and nurses wheeled me to Recovery, putting a tube in my hand with a button for trouble. The lights went dark, the fans slowed to a stop. A janitor wheeled a bucket down the hall. And here was me: blinking fool, alone in my anger like they always wanted. At 3:13 I started buzzing the tube. Four minutes passed, then five, then thirteen. I buzzed and buzzed. I jammed it with my thumb. I wanted to know didn't anybody give a shit.

I got better. I learned to angle my wheelchair, then stand, take a step. Weeks passed. Four long months. Strength crept back to my neck, my arms, my back. Bao whirred loose the screws of the handrails. Little dark holes remained in the walls, damp with stray fibers, and when I touched them I remembered where the smooth cold metal had been. I found the Mount Rushmore coffee mug, rolled behind the washing machine and miraculously intact. Even my hands hardened with muscle: I was a superhero discovering her powers. On my pelvis a new scar curved in a cracked smile. I poked it when I sat on the toilet, the pain still tender. Who's in there? I thought. Who are you?

Okay. So we no longer had a car. But Bao didn't seem angry. Instead he was grateful, dutiful, the person he used to be. He poured me Froot Loops. He borrowed a bicycle and used that. That cross he wore every day now, glinting quietly through his shirt. I was still sleeping on the rollaway, worried that somehow I'd now be bad at sex. But Bao didn't seem to mind. Instead he gazed at me each day like I was worth something immeasurable. After awhile I started getting the hang of that too.

Little things amazed me. The smooth curves of the teakettle, dotted with moisture.

Tree needles, sprayed out and brushing the window in a breeze.

More and more the hospital seemed far away: its shiny boxes, relentlessly clean.

From the basement Bao brought up grandmah's Zitan chair. He slid off the sheet, eased it to the table, and kneeled to smooth its legs with a damp silver cloth. I lowered myself onto the bony cushion, thumbing the grooves of dragon tails that curved down the armrests. Suddenly it seemed too big for me, too grand. But that was ridiculous—when Grandmah was alive she would

fart all over this thing. I scooched my butt around, got comfy. Bao folded up the wheelchair. To the curb went the crutches, the walker, both canes. We could have recycled them or given them away, but we enjoyed watching garbage men hurl them into the truck, the grimy walls descending to slurp them up for good.

Right about then is when the letter shows up.

Bao was at work. It was a sunny, ignorant day.

It came in the mailbox: real envelope and paper and gold sticker sealing the flap. It was wrapped in a second letter from the surgeon himself. His boxy handwriting was rushed with loops of fervor; so awestruck was he by the selflessness that he just had to chaperone the missive himself. I looked at his letter. I thought that doctors couldn't write at all, not even their own names.

Then came hers. She had used a notepad shaped like a daisy. Blue gel pen.

Dear Recipient,

My name is Rose Rothario. I'm a thirty-six-year-old white female, and I live in Greater Boston.

In 2015 I read my first article about living kidney donation, and in the years since I've been constantly reminded of the dire need for kidneys in our country. Armed with this knowledge, I knew that I could make a maximum impact on another's life with only minimal risk to myself.

I dropped open the letter. Six whole pages. Details about her surgery, the preparation, the PT. It went on.

I'm so grateful to the MGH Transplant Team, who gave me such attentive care throughout the eight months spanning my first test to the date of our paired exchange. My own childhood was marked by trauma and abuse; I didn't have the opportunity to form secure attachments with my family of origin. But a positive outcome of my early life is empathy. Others might be motivated to donate to a friend or family member, but to me, the suffering of strangers is just as real.

A few things about me: I like sailing, camping, jewelry, and cats. Throughout my preparation, I was most excited that the deserving recipient would come off of the list of Deceased Donors. I focused my mental energy on imagining and celebrating YOU.

I stared at the YOU, underlined three times.

My gift, which begat yours, trails no strings. You are deserving of an extended and healthy life simply for existing.

That said, I would love to know more about you. Perhaps we could meet. But I accept any level of involvement, even if it is none.

Kindly,

Rose M. Rothario

There was a photograph. She was tall, slender, a bursting ponytail harnessed to one side. Scissors had cut away the image near her shoulder, as if to remove a person who'd been standing beside

her. I lifted the thing to my nose but it just smelled like a photograph: paper and faint glue, no whiff of a particular person. Her creased smile said she was about my age. She was at some sort of county fair. She was standing by a Tilt-A-Whirl, surrounded by blurry feet, holding a rainbow-swirled lollipop in her fist.

So her name was Rose.

I wanted a cigarette.

But I didn't have one. Bao was at work. Sui was in Xian, obviously asleep. Dad in Bismarck and Mom in Philly, but they had never been any help at all.

I hobbled to the kitchen, opened the cupboard. A stupid move—what did I expect? No car and no booze. I looked for the mouthwash, the vanilla extract, that vial of Estée Lauder. But Bao had done a full sweep.

I sat on the couch. I breathed in and out.

At some point Bao came home. I woke to see him scanning the papers sprayed across the table, wearing red bike shorts circled with sweat. Bao in bike shorts! He looked like no one I knew. Just a stranger pausing to examine a map. He read the whole thing standing up, helmet still on.

“Wow,” he said, staring at the wall. “Wow.”

“I know.”

“Where did she come from?” he said. “Where? Where?”

“How should I know?” I said, sounding ugly. But Bao didn't seem to hear; he was glancing frantically around our house.

“We need to do something,” he said. “We need to show our thanks.”

“Of course,” I said, though that wasn’t what I’d been thinking at all. But all of this gratitude: it shut me up.

There was some debate over who should make the call. “Can you do it?” I said. “I feel weird. You could say I’m still recovering?”

Bao frowned and unclicked his helmet. He pulled at the Velcro straps on his gloves. Okay: I could see that he didn’t want to. But when I was dying he’d stopped saying No, and the habit—for now—was sticking. I saw indecision worming under his face. I let it. Finally he went to the kitchen and beeped forcefully at the microwave.

We washed the dishes. We dried them. Then Bao called her up. He was nervous, chewing rapidly a wedge of Big Red that I could smell from the couch. I could see that he wanted a drink. I hugged my knees, bending to suck the wet collar of my sweatshirt.

Bao’s voice twisted to a whole new register, leaping to each sentence like he was competing for enthusiasm. “We would love, love, love to have you,” he said. I held still. Bao never love, love, loved anything. “No, no. It would be an honor for *us*.”

Arrangements were made. She would come on Thursday. Suddenly the whole house looked barbarically disarrayed—the faded curtains, outdated carpet, objects that made no sense, revealing our vulgarities. That old panicky feeling. I imagined her perched on this sagging couch, tanned legs too long to fold under the coffee table. It was too late to change the cabinets. Too late to paint the trims. This wasn’t a place where we chummed out with guests. This wasn’t a place where people wanted to hang.

She would come at eleven a.m. “What do we get her?” said Bao, shaking his head. He laughed in choked bursts. “Your other kidney? Your spleen?”

I wanted to be sick, to hide under the table. “I think I’m going to go to yoga now.”

“You are? Good for you. Give it a try.” He hurried his gloves back on. “I’m going to get a haircut. I’m going to get some food.”

“Okay,” I said, standing as he left like I was about to put on my shoes. But I didn’t go anywhere. I fell back on the couch. I stared into my phone. *Did you take the pm Xyletenol?* wrote mom. From Sui: *U ok? Where did u go?* I ignored them and played Angry Birds. They weren’t writing to check in. They were writing to *check*.

In the morning I went to the basement. Looked for something sentimental. On some boxes were a wine decanter, a stereo system, scratched roller blades, a jar of batteries. A ceramic Christmas tree that lit up, a velvet painting of John Wayne. An exercise ball and some wind chimes slumped on top. I thought about the wind chimes. They were nice, I could dust them off. But all these things had to do with me, not my Angel. She needed something that meant something. Like a pint of my own blood. Whatever. Nothing worked.

I went to Target. I figured out the bus. And oh my god: the white floor tiles: so shiny! They reflected the fluorescents gleaming overhead, as if the whole place was lit from under my feet. The shopping cart wheeling over each blip of tile—so smooth. The shiny loops of blond and auburn samples down shelves of hair dye—delightful! I grabbed shampoo, a pack of Slims (oh, sweet aroma through the plastic), and a can of white paint.

I thought about a card. I went to Thank You and Thank You For Her. Fanned through the options of embossed sayings. “Life is measured not by the number of breaths we take, but by the

moments that take our breath away.” Um. Can you say no way? I stuffed them back, envelopes all mismatched.

I went to Accessories. She said she liked jewelry, so. I loaded up. Like I was tearing stuff off the spinning Y-shaped displays. Clinking necklaces and heavy bangles and crystal rings and something called a toe clutch. A dozen watches—who wore watches? I had a field day. I filled my cart like they do in the movies when a shooter’s on the loose or the neighborhood’s on fire, grabbing for my Angel like I’d never do for myself.

At Checkout the glittering pile moved down the conveyor belt. The girl beeped her gun around the stash and said that’ll be \$193.80. Whoa now. Hold up.

The girl looked right through my face. She wanted to know did I want to put something back. Um, yeah, you think? So I came home with a pendant, the toe clutch, and two bracelets on clearance. \$34.17 total. But nobody would know.

“What in god’s name?” said Bao. I was kneeling on newspaper in the foyer, holding a brush wet with harsh chemicals.

“Our trims,” I said. “They’re a wreck.”

Bao breathed through his nostrils. But he only said, “Baby.”

“I know, I know.” I tried getting to my feet, but pain like a snapped trap unfolded with my body. Bao grabbed my arm. I was dizzy and restless. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t want her here.

I wiped down the coffee table. I gathered the crap on the staircase.

I ripped the tags off the jewelry and looked for a box. No box. I fetched a Gladware and buried them in there with Kleenex, pretty-like. I found an old gift certificate to Olive Garden and put that in too. Wrapped it up—technically Christmas paper, red with snowflakes, but pretty ambiguous, and anyway it was November. No card. What was I supposed to say?

Bao painted cream cheese onto crackers. I warmed some potato skins. “I cooked!” he said, smiling proudly, carrying a plate to the living room.

At 10:56 the doorbell went off. My skin rang out in alarms. Bao practically dropped the plate in his rush to the door, one cracker spinning off and sliding across the table.

I heard her voice before I saw her. So much exclaiming, hugging, everything loud. They came gliding toward me, Bao grinning anxiously and searching my face. She was even more radiant than the photo. Slightly older-looking—her eyes crinkling with her smile—but emanating a glow that no camera could capture without filters. Out came her arm, and her long, elegant hand, the delicate curves of her fingernails, tips creamy white.

“Chuntao?” said Bao. His eyebrows were dismayed, urging me on.

“Hi!” I said. “Hi hi hi. Come in, come in.” I guess I was staring. We shook. Her hands were cold from outside. Mine were sweaty and I wiped them on my pants, though I worried maybe that would look rude, like I didn’t want her germs. I watched her shoes, two sculptures of soft green suede. She was too shiny to look at. It was like staring at the sun.

“This,” she said, inhaling deeply, “is incredible.”

“Right on,” I said. My voice sounded funny—hard and thin. “Sorry. I feel super weird right now.”

Rose Rothario's glossy lips spread in a generous smile. "I can't believe it either," she said. She placed her hand on her chest. She gazed around our house, at our weird stuff and the carpet slashed with lines from the vacuum cleaner.

Bao was talking to Rose Rothario, both nodding vigorously. The crescendo of a lawn mower, trucks guzzling by: the voice of Rose Rothario rose above them all. It was like a singing melody, exuberant and controlled. She walked around our living room, examining photos, stuff on the mantle, a breeze of high-pitched peaches trailing in her wake. I felt like a zoo animal watching human onlookers make their way toward more interesting exhibits. Suddenly my arms were too long, there was something on my face. I wiped the hair from my eyes. At least they were moving, killing time.

"Is this a family heirloom?" Rose Rothario had removed her glasses, and was bending to examine the carvings on Grandmah's chair.

"I guess so," said Bao, folding his hands like a docent. "It's Chuntao's."

"It's mine," I said. "And yeah, those chairs. They're dying out."

"It's a stunning relic," said Rose Rothario, roving her head along the back, the armrests, and the worn, deflated cushion. A stunning relic? It was a chair. Grandmah's chair. I imagined her tiny old body hunched in the seat, raising her furry eyebrows, wondering Who the hell?

Bao suggested that we sit around the coffee table. "We made some snacks," he said. "Nothing special."

"Oh my goodness," said Rose Rothario, turning to admire the plate of Ritz crackers fanned around the rim. I hated the sight of them: everything the same pale color. But Rose didn't seem to care. She sat, folding her skirt and holding her abdomen on the way down. I wondered if it hurt: the hole inside of her. I wondered if she missed it. But I sort of didn't want to know.

We looked at each other, the triangle of us. Nobody ate. Finally I lifted a cracker and put it in my mouth, which tasted like nothing, like water, just cold and crumbles and creamy stuff, mashing around.

“So you live in Shelby?” said Bao, and I went in for my apple juice.

“I do,” said Rose Rothario cheerfully, but her eyes snagged on my glass as I lifted it from the table and up to my lips. “You’re drinking wine,” she said.

I stopped mid-sip. “Actually, no. It’s a Welch’s.”

“Oh!” she said, her mouth bursting into a nervous smile. “Ha ha ha.” She looked at Bao, then at me, then the hands in her lap.

We were quiet. I drank my drink. And I tried to remember all things I’ve had to learn: don’t react, don’t react, don’t react. I settled into the cushions against my back, the air getting fuzzy with shapes and colors. Bao and Rose Rothario discussed the neighborhoods of Shelby—what restaurants were nice and which ones you should skip. They were talking holidays, or somebody’s pet, or the best commute from this place to that. “But this neighborhood is also beautiful,” she said, ridiculously. “Do you like to go for walks? Or bike rides?”

“We’re definitely doing more of that,” said Bao, his eyes in a vigilant diameter. “We’re really going to get into that more.”

“Not me,” I said, swirling my glass. “I’m still healing. So, yeah.”

Rose Rothario returned her gaze to me. “Of course,” she said. “I found that yoga and gentle stretching was all I could do at first.”

“I’ve been thinking about the yoga,” I said. “But I bet I’d be bad.”

“Maybe Rose could teach you,” said Bao.

The eyes of Rose Rothario perked up. “Truly?”

“You could show her the ropes,” said my husband.

“Perhaps we could go together,” said Rose. My face must have been doing something, because then she said, “Or. Perhaps not. Whatever you prefer is fine.”

“What? What?” Bao said to me. “I thought you wanted someone to go with.”

Rose waved everyone off the subject. “It’s really not important.” She smoothed her skirt. “It’s okay, Bao.” And I didn’t like her saying my husband’s name.

“Excuse me,” said Bao, and he made for the bathroom.

I followed him. Cracked open the door and slipped in. He was peeing into the toilet, and had to hold himself in place when he saw me. “Are you out of your mind?” he hissed in this soft-loud voice.

I hissed back. “Yoga with her? Are you kidding me? I would rather die.”

“That’s great,” said Bao, quickly shaking and zipping his pants. “That’s just what I want to hear.”

“This is weird,” I said. “All of it.”

At the sink Bao splashed water all over the place. “I happen to be thankful,” he said. “The woman helped a person in need. She saved my wife.”

A person in need? Okay. What the fuck. “So I guess she’s a saint?” I said. “She’s the kindest bitch on the planet?”

“Can you just go be with her?” he said, hurrying a towel up his arms. “Can you just go be a good person?”

“You go,” I said.

“No, you,” he said. And we stood there in the bathroom, panting and angry and scared of the woman in our house.

We exited. We made our way to the living room, where Rose was still sitting pin-straight on the couch, waiting just like we'd left her, like somebody's dog.

Bao clasped his hands and looked at Rose Rothario. His voice went soft. "Before we let another moment pass, Rose, we just want to express to you...we just want to tell you how important..." He glared in my direction. I knew what he wanted. But I couldn't say it. That angry puppy face made me not want to say anything at all.

Then he said, "I think I'll leave you two alone. You must have a lot to say to each other."

"Where are you going?" I said. "Where?" And I felt through my heart the spear that would orphan me.

"I'll be back," said Bao, but he wouldn't look at me. Now I was pleading with every inch of my skin. Please. Don't leave me here. But he snapped up his helmet.

He didn't tie his shoes. He eased the door until it clicked, leaving a loud and bristling silence, like the world tipping over. I was in my living room, I was standing on the carpet, a lawnmower going on like it was any old day.

I hurried up and gave Rose her present. She practically squealed in delight, there were little tears in her eyes. Okay, okay. That was done. I sunk into the couch. She lifted the pendant—a long chain with a copper sunburst—and eased it over her head. The remains of the red paper were cracked open on the coffee table. She hid the Gladware away in her purse, saying she'd fully relish the rest later.

"It was fun to buy," I said. "I had to figure out the bus, but it was actually totally fine."

Rose Rothario frowned. “Forgive me, but I know there was an accident.”

“Yeah,” I said.

She nodded with goony eyes. “That must have been terrifying.”

“You bet,” I said, but the truth was that I couldn’t remember. I just remembered being in the basement, gulping gin from the Mount Rushmore mug, coins vibrating across the washing machine. When had I decided to go downtown? How had I even gotten in the car? It was the logic of a dream. “Trees!” I said. “They come out of nowhere.”

Rose Rothario frowned. “There was a storm?”

“Big time,” I lied. I described fierce winds, driving hail, the windshield wipers flapping with my hands. I marveled at my own voice, making these things up. It sounded correct. “The dash slammed me all over. They had to take out a rib; it was in total smithereens.” I pointed at the torso of Rose Rothario. “Hey, you got any extras in there?”

I chuckled. Rose Rothario let out a strained little laugh. Immediately I felt terrible and wished that she would go.

“So...yes,” she said, smoothing her skirt. “How goes the recovery?”

I sipped my apple juice. “I’m not *in* recovery, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“What?” she said, blinking. “Oh, no. That’s not what I meant.”

“No worries.” I reached for a cracker and put the whole thing in my mouth. “I get you.”

Rose Rothario stared.

“I’m great,” I said. “I can walk up stairs, catch the bus.”

“That’s excellent,” she nodded. “I do find that yoga does help. I still can’t sleep through the night, though.”

“Neither can I,” I said. “I keep getting up to pee.”

“Are you finding it hard to tie your shoes? And just general bending over?”

“Yeah,” I said.

“Me too.”

“What a bitch,” I said.

Rose Rothario took a cracker and bit off an edge. She chewed in silence. More and more it seemed harder for her to look at me. Her eyes drifted to the window, to the ceiling, to her free hand in her lap. Finally she returned my way, her jaw working the cracker, but she looked right through me, as if to some far-off mountain. Then I realized. She was watching my torso. She was thinking about her kidney, buried inside of me. “Do take care of it,” she said quietly.

I went in for another cracker. “You think that I wouldn’t?”

“No, that’s not what I mean.” She looked away, waving off the thought. “It’s yours, of course. Never mind. It’s yours now.”

“Well, sort of,” I said, feeling bad. For a moment my appetite left me. “You gave it to me. It’s still sort of yours.” She squirmed, knocking her knees together. “Don’t worry,” I said in her direction. “So much is different now. I’m going to treat it so good. I’m going to take good care.”

“I’m sure,” she said. “Of course.”

“Look,” I said, leaning forward. I concentrated on the limp hand in her lap. “I have to be honest with you. I’m not really looking for connections right now. Like I’m not really looking to hang out. Don’t get me wrong: I am totally grateful to you. Like one hundred percent. But I’ve got too many friends already. I can barely keep up.”

“Oh, no no no no,” said Rose Rothario. I looked up. Her mouth was drooped to the floor. “I’m not interested in friendship.”

“Like I don’t want to offend you, but.”

“I just wanted to meet you,” she said. “I just thought it would be a meaningful experience.”

“It is,” I said. “No doubt.”

We sat, chewing our crackers. Rose Rothario cupped one palm under hers to catch the crumbs. Slowly my heart pooled with relief. I’d said what I needed to. Now she could leave.

But she didn’t. She kept munching her cracker like a rodent. What was she waiting for? What did she want? “Is there something that you want?” I said.

And that’s when Rose Rothario’s face blottedched and crumpled. Her hair fell forward. She was crying into her hand. All the while the other hand tried keeping the shard of cracker aloft in its fingers. “I’m sorry,” she said. “This is all just so much.”

I didn’t know what was happening. What I thought was: What is this, this white woman, crying on my couch? Crying to *me*. I felt bad for her, but I also wanted to slap her. Instead I leaned forward and I put my hand on Rose Rothario’s knee. It was warm, shivering, faceted with bone.

Her hands covered her face, but I knew what she was thinking. She was thinking it was supposed to be different. “So...” I said to her hair. “I get it, you know. When I was dying, people were nicer.”

“What? What?” said Rose Rothario. She was pulling at her face.

“Never mind,” I said. I leaned back. Maybe I’d just wait this one out.

But after awhile Rose Rothario quieted. She reached around for the Gladware and fetched the Kleenex, dabbing her eyes. “I’ll tell you what I would like,” she said. “I would love to have a photo with you.” She smiled weakly through her wet face. “That would mean a lot to me.”

I imagined myself immortalized next to Rose Rothario. I didn't love the idea. But maybe that would do the trick. "If it floats your boat," I said. She stood up, Kleenex balled in her fist, and looked for the spot that she wanted. She retraced her steps around the foyer, the mantle, the photos on the wall. But I knew what she was after. She curled her hands around it. My chair.

I hesitated. "You're not going to post it somewhere, are you?"

"Do you want me to?"

"Never."

"Then no," she said. I stood up, shuffled over. The black wood gleamed with white lines of lighted grooves. "Do you want to sit in it?" she offered.

"Doesn't matter," I said. But then I changed my mind. "Yes, actually. I want to sit in it." As long as it wasn't her. I lowered myself down. I rested my elbows. Beside me Rose Rothario crouched down, touching the armrest for balance. "Careful," I said.

"Wow, how old is this thing?"

"Old," I said. She knelt on the carpet. She smelled like peach shampoo. There were squiggly grays in her hair and a bumpy mole behind her ear.

She fussed with her phone, stuck out her arm. I didn't know where to look until she angled the phone toward me and I saw our faces looking back. The photo would be fuzzy, rough with sediments of darkness, but I knew that she would treasure it always. Because the thing about the dying is that they command the deepest respect, respect like an underground river resonant with primordial sounds, the kind of respect that people steal from one another.

"Ready?" she said. And we peered into her outstretched hand. I saw my grandmeh's chair. I saw the face of Rose Rothario. I saw that I was smiling, my eyes cast slightly sideways, looking at something off the screen but I didn't know what it was.